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# Intelligence Memorandum

*Hanoi's Options And Probable Strategy Choices  
During The Period From April 1971 Through  
December 1972*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
26 April 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Hanoi's Options And Probable Strategy Choices  
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Introduction

This memorandum's primary object is to analyze the manpower and logistics constraints likely to impinge on the Vietnamese Communists' strategic choices from now through the end of 1972. But logistic and manpower considerations are neither the sole nor even the primary determinants of Hanoi's strategic decisions. Hence, we also attempt to put these factors in proper perspective -- that is, the perspective from which they are viewed and weighed in Hanoi.

I. Hanoi's Objectives and Concept of the Struggle

1. For more than 40 years the Vietnamese Communist party has struggled to unify all of Vietnam under its political control. Because of the historical context within which this long struggle for power has been waged, the Party's unswerving pursuit of its paramount objective of political control has necessarily entailed the simultaneous pursuit of two related objectives: crushing all indigenous (Vietnamese) opposition to Party rule and expelling from Vietnam all foreign presence, especially military presence, capable of constituting an obstacle to the Party's political ambitions.

2. During their four-plus decades of struggle, the Vietnamese Communists have fought with courage,

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tenacity, and a ruthlessness born of intense conviction. Despite the loss of two key members through death (Nguyen Chi Thanh in July 1967 and Ho Chi Minh in September 1969), there have been no significant changes in or additions to the Politburo for more than a quarter of a century -- a period during which the Party's non-Communist Vietnamese opponents have lived under a bewildering variety of governments and a period that has encompassed six American Presidents.

3. One key element of the Vietnamese Communists' underlying world view is the conviction that they are tougher, more resilient, and possessed of more staying power than any of their opponents -- domestic or foreign. This conviction is coupled with, and buttressed by, a scorn for their opponents -- again both domestic and foreign -- whom the Communists, as an article of faith, deem lacking in equivalent motivation or determination.

4. The Vietnamese Communists believe they were cheated out of their rightful spoils of victory after the French abandoned Indochina, primarily because the United States opted to sustain an anti-Communist regime in South Vietnam after the Geneva Conference of 1954. When the 1956 elections provided for in that agreement were not held and the Diem government failed to collapse, the Communists set out in the late 1950s to eradicate the non-Communist political structure in South Vietnam by whatever combination of subversion and armed force might prove necessary.

5. After the United States assumed a direct participatory role in the military struggle in 1965, Hanoi tailored its strategy primarily to wearing down the US will to persist -- just as the Party's strategy during the Franco-Viet Minh struggle had been primarily tailored to eroding the French will to persist. Subsequently, captured documents reflecting decisions made by the Party's Central Committee in December 1965 demonstrate that the Communists then envisioned several more years of hard but militarily inconclusive fighting, which would be followed by negotiations in which the United States would agree to a political settlement on Communist terms.

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6. Much has happened in Indochina during the six years since the United States intervened in force, yet Hanoi's objectives and its basic strategy for pursuing them have not appreciably altered. Firmly embedded in and central to the Communist view of the whole struggle are two related ideas: that of outlasting the United States and that of ultimately inducing or compelling the United States to abandon the struggle in a manner likely to collapse the will and capacity of the Party's non-Communist domestic opponents to resist the imposition of Party rule. Various types of reliable evidence indicate that Hanoi believed that the United States might be ready to negotiate its way out of Vietnam in the spring and summer of 1969, but Communist documents dating from that period acknowledged that the war might drag on for a long time before the United States could be brought to make the kind of fundamental political concessions that would produce a settlement on Hanoi's terms -- and Hanoi is not yet ready to consider settlement on any other terms. Events of the intervening two years have dampened these tentative 1969 Hanoi hopes, but the Vietnamese Communists still regard as basic the idea that the US involvement can be brought optimally (for them) to an end, not by driving US forces out of Vietnam (as French forces were never driven out of Vietnam) but by a negotiated solution that produces the results the Party thought would be produced by its 1954 settlement with the French.

7. While the Communists very much want the United States out of the struggle, at the same time they are violently opposed to President Nixon's clear policy of relatively rapid disengagement through Vietnamization. The answer to this seeming paradox is that what Hanoi does not want -- indeed, clearly feels it must endeavor to thwart at almost whatever cost -- is to see the United States curtail its presence in a way that leaves behind a viable, confident, and reasonably effective non-Communist strture even potentially capable of indefinitely thwarting the Party's quest for power over all of Vietnam. What Hanoi does want is to have the United States get out in a way that, of itself, helps collapse effective Vietnamese opposition to Communist rule.

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### II. Hanoi's Targets

8. In assessing Hanoi's probable behavior and its view of its strategic options, it should be remembered that the Party targets primarily on its enemies' will, not their territory. In Hanoi's eyes, the struggle is a struggle for political power to be pursued by any and all methods or techniques capable of contributing to this objective. It is not a struggle for terrain or conventional military objectives per se. Over the next year the Vietnamese Communists' mix of actual actions will probably be directed against three primary targets.

9. First, and at the moment probably the most important in Hanoi's eyes, is the will and attitude of the American electorate. The Vietnamese Communists know, and acknowledge, that they beat the French not through force of arms but when continuation of the struggle became a politically unsaleable commodity in Paris. Hanoi's highest current aspiration is to see continuation of the struggle become equally unsaleable in Washington. Hence Hanoi's action choices over the next year or so will be heavily influenced by its estimate of the immediate or short-term impact these actions are likely to have on American domestic opinion.

10. Second, Hanoi's actions will be targeted against the unity and confidence of the Communists' domestic Vietnamese opposition. The Party is clearly determined to do everything it can to foment discord, strife, discouragement, and defeatism within the GVN's military and civil establishment and among the South Vietnamese populace.

11. Third, and closely related to the other two, Hanoi clearly wishes to target against South Vietnamese confidence in continued US assistance and support. Hanoi will do everything possible to poison relations between the United States and South Vietnam and exacerbate any extant sources of friction. The concept Hanoi wants to sell in South Vietnam is that the United States is an unreliable partner on the verge of being compelled by domestic pressures to opt out of the struggle, leaving the South Vietnamese without resources sufficient to carry on the struggle alone.

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III. Factors Hanoi Must Consider

12. As it attempts to devise action packages that will further its objectives and attack its chosen targets, there are certain basic factors that Hanoi must weigh. The first of these is the overall situation itself. Over the past two years, the broad trends in South Vietnam and developments in Cambodia and Laos have generally run in directions adverse to Hanoi's interests. From Hanoi's point of view, these trends must be checked, for the attitudes Hanoi wishes to induce in the minds of its opponents will be difficult to implant if the overall situation does not change or -- in Allied terms -- improves during a time when the direct US presence and degree of military involvement in the struggle progressively decreases. In endeavoring to reverse these trends -- and indeed in all its actions -- Hanoi must, however, be conscious of the political risk of public failure. If it wants to project an image of growing Communist strength and capacity, Hanoi can ill afford to attempt major actions that appear unsuccessful.

13. One particular factor the Communists must assess is the net impact of Lam Son 719, an operation which has come to be invested on all sides with a considerable degree of psychological and symbolic importance. The North Vietnamese had anticipated such an operation for some time and were quite concerned over the impact such an Allied move might have on their ability to sustain their forces farther south.

14. But because it weathered the operation and its forces were able to mount a counterattack that made the position of the South Vietnamese in Laos untenable, Hanoi's confidence in its longer term prospects probably has been enhanced. Hanoi probably calculates that ARVN, on its own, would have great difficulty in mounting further cross-border operations of this magnitude once the US is largely out of the picture. In addition, Hanoi may now be more confident that the South Vietnamese will be unable to contain Communist forces over the longer term as the US withdraws from Vietnam.

15. Some broadcasts from Hanoi suggest that in the wake of the Lam Son 719 operation the Communists are more inclined to believe the time is

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ripe for mounting stronger attacks against South Vietnamese forces in order to challenge the strategy of Vietnamization. An article published early in April asserts, for example, that a Vietnamized Allied force such as the South Vietnamese in Laos cannot cope with an adversary fighting a "bit campaign of annihilation" waged by large, concentrated formations. It says flatly at one point that the results of the operation show the Communists are fully able to defeat the Allies militarily -- a boast notably absent from Communist commentaries in the past two years. This writer does not argue that Communist tactics in Laos can be transferred to all of South Vietnam. He acknowledges that Communist forces in some areas must stick to guerrilla warfare, but he implies that when conditions are appropriate the Communists should strike hard and decisively as they did in Laos.

16. Another factor clearly figuring in Hanoi's calculations is what Hanoi sees as a sharp rise in the tide of opposition to the war within the United States -- a theme prominently played with considerable supportive detail in the North Vietnamese domestic press. Hanoi has often miscalculated American opinion and the impact of Vietnamese Communist actions on American policies. Nonetheless, heavily influenced by its experience with the French, Hanoi's leaders are convinced that domestic opposition to the war within the United States constitutes one of their strongest political assets. During the latter part of 1970, Hanoi appeared to be discomfited by President Nixon's success in muting or disarming US critics of the war, particularly after October when his proposals for a cease fire and an international conference received widespread endorsement in the United States and abroad. Its own comments show that Hanoi is clearly heartened by the current rise in the decibel count of US opposition in the wake of Lam Son 719 and the Calley trial verdict. Indeed, current US reactions to Lam Son 719 -- or at least the way that operation was generally reported -- have almost certainly strengthened Hanoi's inclination to conclude that strong Communist military action that can credibly be portrayed as successful is among the best methods of intensifying opposition to the war within the United States as it did in France in the early 1950s.

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17. The Hanoi leadership is certainly aware that events over the next year or so are likely to affect the Vietnamese Communist Party's fortunes and prospects well into the 1970s. The October 1971 Vietnamese presidential election provides both opportunities and risks for Hanoi. If, regardless of who actually wins, the electoral process diminishes the credibility and international acceptability of the GVN or has a divisive net impact on the South Vietnamese body politic, then Hanoi's fortunes will have been improved. On the other hand, again regardless of who actually wins, if the electoral process contributes more to unity and cohesion than divisiveness, then Hanoi's prospects will have suffered a setback.

18. In Hanoi's eyes, however, the US elections in 1972 and the political campaign preceding them probably have an importance considerably greater than that of the Vietnamese elections in 1971. Hanoi clearly regards President Nixon's present policy of Vietnamization and gradual US disengagement as a major threat to Vietnamese Communist ambitions. They would clearly like to see a situation and climate in which President Nixon either was obliged to abandon the Indochina struggle or else was defeated by an opponent publicly and unambiguously committed (a la Mendes-France when he succeeded Laniel in 1954) to the speediest possible disengagement from the Indochina entanglement. This, of course, is the result Hanoi would most like its actions to produce. We will now turn to the question of Hanoi's capabilities for mounting actions designed to increase the likelihood of such a result.

#### IV. Logistic and Manpower Constraints

19. In the military arena, Hanoi's capabilities are in large measure a function of logistics and manpower. The logistic and manpower constraints on possible enemy actions in 1972 have been analyzed with reference to seven possible enemy strategies. Case I, the minimum case, assumes a continuation of the protracted warfare with its occasional high points which was typical of 1970. Case VII, the maximum case, assumes a sustained general offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia. As intermediate cases we have

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also analyzed the logistic and manpower requirements to support more limited offensive strategies confined to only one or two military regions, with military action in the other regions being held at 1971 levels. The five intermediate cases are as follows:

Case II - offensive confined to MR 1

Case III - offensive confined to MR 2

Case IV - offensive in both MR 1 and MR 2

Case V - offensive confined to Cambodia

Case VI - offensive in both MR 1 and Cambodia

20. It should be noted that the strategies discussed in this memorandum involve sustained multi-battalion offensive actions over extended periods of time. The Communists always have the capability, however, to mount quickly actions which would fall far short of the strategies we are analyzing but would still be significant escalations of the level of combat.

21. The methodology used to determine the logistic and manpower requirements for these strategies is the same as that employed by CIA in its analysis [redacted] In this analysis we make the following key assumptions:

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a. The buildup of stockpiles and force augmentations required for each strategy would depend completely on the performance of the Ho Chi Minh supply system during a 1971-72 dry season of eight months' duration.

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b. The air interdiction programs and the associated BDA during the 1971-72 dry season would remain at current levels.

c. The forces in southern Laos would be held at the level maintained there at the beginning of the current dry season -- 80,000 troops.

d. The logistic and manpower requirements needed to implement each strategy would be roughly equivalent to the average maintained during 1968.

In this section we discuss our estimated requirements under the assumptions stated above, first from the point of view of logistic considerations and then of manpower requirements. The impact of various changes in these assumptions is discussed in Section V.

#### Logistics

22. Table 1 presents our estimates of the daily input of supplies which would have to be moved into southern Laos from North Vietnam during the 1971-72 dry season to support each of the alternative strategies. To give some appreciation of the logistic feasibility of these tasks, the input requirements are also compared with our current estimates of the actual tonnages which will have been put into the Laos system during the 1970-71 dry season.

23. If the mid-points of our estimates are used to compare input requirements and actual performance during the current dry season, we find that all of the alternative strategies except Case VII -- the country-wide offensive -- would be feasible by the end of the 1971-72 dry season.

24. If, however, the actual performance of the logistic system were at the low end of the range -- 295 tons a day -- Hanoi's choice of strategic options would become more limited.

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Table 1

## Logistic Factors for Alternative Strategies

Strategy	Input Requirement	Tons per Day
		1970-71 Dry Season Performance
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	278	295-370
Case II (MR 1) Mid-point	304-322 313	295-370 332
Case III (MR 2) Mid-point	280-282 281	295-370 332
Case IV (MR 1 & 2) Mid-point	308-328 318	295-370 332
Case V (Cambodia) Mid-point	293-301 297	295-370 332
Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia) Mid-point	320-347 333	295-370 332
Case VII (GVN/Cambodia) Mid-point	332-364 348	295-370 332

In this circumstance Case IV (MR 1 & 2), Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia) and Case VII (GVN/Cambodia) would not be feasible during the 1971-72 dry season. Case V, an offensive confined to Cambodia, would under our model be technically feasible, but the margin between input requirements and performance at the low end of the range is so narrow that the attainment of this capability during the next dry season would be questionable.\*

25. If performance of the logistic system were at the high end of the range -- 370 tons a

\* See paragraph 29 for a discussion of factors that would change substantially the judgment on Case V.

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day -- all of the alternative strategies, even Case VII (the country-wide offensive) would be feasible. However, in this case the margin is so slight that even on logistic grounds we believe Hanoi would feel constrained to await the start of the 1972 dry season in order to ensure a reliable supply line before attempting such a major offensive.

Timing

26. The amount of time required to build up the stockpiles required to support each alternative strategy is shown in Table 2. The time required ranges from a low of 20 days in the case of an offensive strategy confined to MR 2 to a high of 314 days for a sustained countrywide offensive in Cambodia and South Vietnam.

27. The calculated times should be regarded as orders of magnitude only. They are, for example, based on the assumption that supplies move through the logistic system at a uniform daily rate. The system, of course, does not work quite this smoothly. It takes a certain amount of time for the system to crank up and for stocks to be rebuilt. Thus, at the beginning of the season, supply movements would be considerably below the average rate for the season. And later in the season, actual performance would exceed the average. The speed with which any one capability could be attained would also be determined by the proximity of the area chosen for offensive activity to North Vietnam. Given these considerations, it is reasonable to assume that it would take longer than 20 days to carry out the logistic movements needed for Case III (MR 2) just as it would take considerably less than 160 days to satisfy the logistic requirements of Case II (MR 1). In addition, it is possible that Hanoi would not feel it necessary to build stockpiles as large as those used in our methodology.

28. For these reasons the timing required for any one strategy may vary by a month or two. A more reasonable approximation of the times during

Table 2

Time Required to Attain Logistic  
Capabilities for Alternative Strategies

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Tons Required for Stockpile Buildup <sup>a/</sup></u>	<u>Days Required to Build Stockpiles <sup>b/</sup></u>
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	None	
Case II (MR 1)	8,830	160
Case III (MR 2)	1,125	20
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)	9,955	181
Case V (Cambodia)	4,950	90
Case VI (MR 1/ Cambodia)	13,780	250
Case VII (GVN/ Cambodia)	17,270	314

a. Calculated on the basis of the mid-point of the estimated input requirements for each strategy as shown in Table 1.

b. Calculated on the basis that actual performance during the 1971-72 dry season would be at the mid-point of the performance estimates used in Table 1.

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the next dry season in which the logistic requirements for each strategy could be met is shown in the following tabulation:

Probable Period of Satisfying Logistic Requirements <u>During the 1971-72 Dry Season</u>			
	<u>Early</u> <u>(Oct-Dec)</u>	<u>Mid-</u> <u>Season</u> <u>(Jan-Feb)</u>	<u>Late</u> <u>(Mar-May)</u>
Case I (1970 Pro- tracted Warfare)	X		
Case II (MR 1)	X		
Case III (MR 2)	X		
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)		X	
Case V (Cambodia)		X	
Case VI (MR 1/ Cambodia)			X
Case VII (GVN/ Cambodia)		Not attain- able	

29. Although the tabulation indicates that the logistic requirements for Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia) could be met during the late part of the 1971-72 dry season, this could only occur under highly favorable conditions. It would require a dry season of maximum duration, and even then the stockpiles would be established so late in the season that the Communists would probably prefer to wait until the next dry season to launch such an offensive. These constraints would be loosened, however, to the extent that the NVA still retain stockpiles left over from shipments made through Sihanoukville. We estimate that these stockpiles could in fact have amounted to at least 2,500 tons of arms and ammunition at the end of 1970. We also note an increasing body of evidence indicating that the flow of supplies into Cambodia during the

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current dry season may be considerably greater than the very small amounts being reported by sensors and roadwatch teams.

30. Case VII (GVN/Cambodia) would not appear to be feasible during the 1971-72 dry season. If the North Vietnamese were starting from scratch, we calculate that it would take 10-11 months to build the requisite stockpiles. Under normal logistic patterns it would be well into the 1972-73 dry season before the logistic requirements for Case VII were attained. Two factors could reduce the required time. The first is the possibility of sizable stockpiles being in place in Cambodia. The second would be to resort to wet season supply operations. We estimate that Hanoi could throughput from 1,200 to 3,000 tons during the wet season. This amount would be equivalent to 30-70 days' consumption in South Vietnam and Cambodia. Thus the existence of Cambodian stockpiles, or wet season resupply activities, or a combination of both would give the Communists a logistic capability to implement Case VII quite early in the 1972-73 dry season.

Manpower

31. The force augmentations that might be required for the implementation of the alternative strategies discussed in this memorandum are shown in Table 3. The estimated force augmentations range from a low of 10,000 in Case III, an offensive confined to MR 2, to a high of 60,000 for Case VII, an offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia.

32. The burden of augmenting the combat forces in South Vietnam and/or Cambodia will fall primarily on North Vietnam, which will also be required to infiltrate sufficient additional manpower to maintain its force levels throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia. The following tabulation shows the total annual infiltration required if Hanoi felt compelled to maintain its total combat force at its current strength of 115,000 troops at the same time that it was augmenting forces as required by each strategy:

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<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Augmentation</u>	<u>Total Infiltration</u>
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	--	100,000
Case II (MR 1)	20,000	120,000
Case III (MR 2)	10,000	115,000
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)	30,000	135,000
Case V (Cambodia)	20,000	150,000
Case VI (MR 1/ Cambodia)	40,000	180,000
Case VII (GVN/ Cambodia)	60,000	250,000-300,000

33. On an annual basis the total manpower drain on North Vietnam could range from 100,000 to 300,000 troops.\* The manpower drain would not appear to be a significant constraint until the annual levy approaches that required for Case VI, or 180,000 troops. An annual levy of this magnitude would pose strains on Hanoi's training capabilities and force some drawdown on trained manpower reserves. The requirement for Case VII -- 250,000 to 300,000 troops -- is so large and the prospects of heavy losses so great that we estimate Hanoi would be unwilling to undertake such a commitment.

34. Whatever the strategy Hanoi should choose, the force augmentations we estimate to be necessary could all be completed in a maximum of six months. The only strategy which would seem to tax the capacity of the infiltration system is the country-wide offensive. We estimate that the augmentation of forces for this strategy -- 60,000 troops -- would stretch out the normal travel time through the infiltration system by 4-8 weeks. But even

\* It should be noted that these requirements are a maximum case. Hanoi has demonstrated consistently that it can continue its current low profile warfare even though its forces are being allowed to erode.

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Table 3  
Force Requirements for Alternative Strategies

	Thousand Persons					
	<u>MR 1</u>	<u>MR 2</u>	<u>MR 3</u>	<u>MR 4</u>	<u>Cambodia</u>	<u>Total</u>
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	35	23	17	15	25	115
Case II (MR 1)	55	23	17	15	25	135
Case III (MR 2)	35	33	17	15	25	125
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)	55	33	17	15	25	145
Case V (Cambodia)	35	23	17	15	45	135
Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia)	55	23	17	15	45	155
Case VII (GVN/Cambodia)	55	33	27	20	40	175

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this augmentation could be completed within six months, or well before the dry season would have ended. The force augmentations required for strategies centered around MRs 1 and 2 (Cases II-IV) could be completed in six to eight weeks. The force augmentations for strategies involving Cambodia (Cases V and VI) would require at least four months to complete.

V. Factors Influencing the Assessment of Offensive Capabilities

35. The analysis of logistic and manpower constraints in Section IV was based on several key assumptions in our model, any one of which, if changed, could substantially affect our results. In this section the analysis is now modified to reflect changes in our assumptions that would seem to be warranted to reflect the situation as it may actually exist in mid-1972.

Timing of Resupply Activities

36. Our previous calculations assumed that resupply was carried out solely during a 1971-72 dry season of eight months' duration and completely through southern Laos. The analysis could be varied by reducing the length of the dry season, by postulating an effort to move supplies during the forthcoming rainy season, and by acknowledging resort to sea infiltration or movement across the DMZ.

37. If the dry season is estimated conservatively to last only seven months, the reduced input from North Vietnam into southern Laos would be on the order of 10,000 tons of supplies. The effect of this shortfall would be to place further constraints on the strategic options available to Hanoi. The NVA would still be able to support a protracted war and to mount offensive campaigns confined to MR 1 or MR 2. Case V (Cambodia) would under our model also be marginally feasible, but the other strategies would be closed out for the 1971-72 dry season. The new relationships are shown in the following tabulation:

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<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Mid-Point of Input Requirement</u>	<u>Mid-Point of Seven-Month Dry Season Performance</u>
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	66,600	69,720
Case II (MR 1)	75,130	69,720
Case III (MR 2)	67,420	69,720
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)	76,260	69,720
Case V (Cambodia)	71,250	69,720
Case VI (MR 1/ Cambodia)	80,080	69,720
Case VII (GVN/ Cambodia)	83,570	69,720

38. If the North Vietnamese made an effort to sustain a flow of supplies during the next wet season, we estimate that they could move from 1,200 to 3,000 tons of supplies into South Vietnam and Cambodia. This is equivalent to 30-70 days' consumption at current levels of combat. The addition of this wet seasons' throughput would make all of the alternative strategies logistically feasible at an earlier point. Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia), which in our previous analysis was only marginally feasible, would now become possible before the end of the 1971-72 dry season. Case VII (GVN/Cambodia) would still be unattainable during the 1971-72 dry season but the time required for its logistical implementation would be reduced by 1-2 months.

#### Air Interdiction Variants

39. Our previous analysis of logistic factors was made on the assumption that the air interdiction program would produce BDA equivalent to 25% of the supply requirements of the Communist forces in southern Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia. To the extent that the 25% BDA misinterprets the volume of supply losses, our estimates of input

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requirements would be affected. In the absence of any available studies on the type and sortie mix of alternative air interdiction programs during the 1971-72 dry season, we have recalculated our input requirements at varying levels of BDA -- 15%, 30%, and 40% -- and have compared them with our original estimates based on 25% BDA. The results are shown in Table 4.

40. At 15% BDA the enemy's resupply requirements would be reduced across-the-board, and even the two most costly options -- Cases VI and VII -- would be more feasible alternatives from the enemy's point of view.

41. Assuming a BDA factor of 30% does not significantly alter the results based on a 25% factor. Case VII (GVN/Cambodia) remains unattainable and the feasibility of Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia) becomes even more questionable.

42. A BDA factor of 40% would raise input requirements to a level where offensive options would be further restricted. With BDA at this level the only options available to North Vietnam would be offensive strategies confined to a single area -- MR 1, MR 2, or Cambodia.

#### Southern Laos

43. We have assumed that North Vietnam would keep a force in southern Laos of about 80,000 combat and logistic troops, the same level maintained at the start of the current dry season. If during the 1971-72 dry season Hanoi had to cope with an operation similar to that of Lam Son 719, the logistic and manpower requirements in southern Laos would increase substantially.

44. If the same number of troops were deployed to southern Laos as were sent in to cope with Lam Son 719, their maintenance, even without combat, would require an additional daily input of 15-20 tons of supplies into southern Laos.

Table 4

Effect of Varying Levels of Bomb Damage Assessment  
on Dry Season Supply Flows Needed to Meet Requirements  
for Sustained Offensive Operations  
1971-72

	Short Tons			
	<u>25% BDA</u>	<u>15% BDA</u>	<u>30% BDA</u>	<u>40% BDA</u>
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	278	255	289	311
Case II (MR 1)	304-322	279-297	316-335	340-361
Case III (MR 2)	280-282	258-260	291-294	314-316
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)	308-328	283-301	320-341	344-367
Case V (Cambodia)	293-301	269-277	304-313	328-337
Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia)	320-347	294-320	333-361	358-389
Case VII (GVN/Cambodia)	332-364	306-335	346-378	372-407

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If we assume an incursion of the approximate total impact of Lam Son 719, the incremental burden on the logistic system could be as high as 30-50 tons a day.

45. The addition of this burden to the logistics would put a substantial crimp into Hanoi's options. Cases IV (MR 1 & 2), VI (MR 1/Cambodia), and VII (GVN/Cambodia) would clearly be precluded, and even Case V (Cambodia) would become marginal in our model.

### Logistic and Manpower Requirements

46. Our analysis to this point assumed that the manpower and logistic requirements placed on the North Vietnamese to mount any of the strategic options would be roughly equivalent to those maintained during 1968. This analysis was made without reference to the effect of US troop withdrawals and redeployments by ARVN forces over the next 12 months.

47. To consider these variants, we have restructured our analysis on the basis of a 9 April draft study prepared by the Military Capabilities Panel of the Vietnam Working Group. We have focused on two variants presented in the 9 April study:

-- a US residual force of 153,000 in mid-1972.

-- a US residual force of 43,400 in mid-1972.

48. On the basis of these variants, and assuming that the North Vietnamese could retain offensive capabilities by maintaining the ratio of friendly



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<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Force Requirements (Thousands)</u>		
	<u>Basic Analysis</u>	<u>Variant 1</u>	<u>Variant 2</u>
Case I (1970 Protracted Warfare)	115	---	---
Case II (MR 1)	135	122	115
Case III (MR 2)	125	132	129
Case IV (MR 1 & 2)	145	139	129
Case V (Cambodia)	135	135	135
Case VI (MR 1/Cambodia)	155	142	135
Case VII (GVN/Cambodia)	175	155	143

49. Under Variant 1 the maximum augmentation required, as in Case VII, is reduced from 60,000 to 40,000 troops. Under Variant 2 the maximum augmentation required is only 28,000 troops. The force augmentations for more limited strategic options are correspondingly reduced and in manpower terms the options require only a small drawdown on North Vietnamese resources. In the case of Variant II the withdrawal of more than 25,000 US troops from MR 1, coupled with the projected absence of ARVN redeployments to the area, would make it possible for the NVA to mount sustained offensive operations without augmenting the force already deployed in the area.

50. In terms of total infiltration requirements -- force augmentation for each strategy plus the infiltration necessary to maintain other forces at current strength -- the two withdrawal rates change the model considerably. In our basic

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analysis we had assumed in the maximum case that mounting and sustaining an offensive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia would require manpower inputs similar to those maintained in 1968 -- 250,000 to 300,000 troops. Under Variants 1 and 2, where the US presence is so drastically reduced, the assumptions underlying this estimate appear to be no longer valid. Given the projected situation for mid-1972, it seems likely that enemy casualties would decrease from their current levels and that maintenance of force structures (as in our minimum case) could be carried out with infiltration of less than 100,000 troops.

51. We are unable at this time to quantify the extent to which infiltration requirements would be reduced by mid-1972 under either Variant 1 or Variant 2. This type of measurement requires further analysis of such factors as the specific deployment and role of US residual forces, the level and types of air support, and particularly the possible changes in enemy casualty rates. Pending the completion of such studies we estimate provisionally that the manpower requirements needed for offensive activities in mid or late 1972 would decline appreciably. Thus, under Variant 1 the maximum offensive strategy would probably become marginally feasible. Under Variant 2 this strategy could probably be sustained without any serious drawdown of North Vietnam's manpower reserves.

52. The projected withdrawals of US troops and redeployments of ARVN would also produce unfavorable changes in the existing balance between friendly and enemy main forces, as shown in Table 5.\* Even without augmenting its forces, the balance by mid-1972 becomes increasingly favorable for NVA forces in all regions but MR 2. The most favorable areas for a possible offensive in mid-1972 would appear to be in MR 1 where only a small augmentation of enemy forces would produce maneuver strength parity.

53. The fairly significant changes in manpower requirements which could result from US withdrawals

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\* These balances are computed on the basis of maneuver forces only and not of the total number of armed personnel on both sides.

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Table 5

Ratio of Friendly to Enemy a/ Combat Forces  
in South Vietnam

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Variant 1</u>	<u>Variant 2</u>
MR 1	1.8	1.4	1.2
MR 2 <u>b/</u>	1.6	2.0	1.9
MR 3 <u>c/</u>	1.5	0.6	0.4
MR 4	1.7	1.4	1.4

*a. Assumes a constant level of enemy combat forces in both variants.*

*b. Assumes ROK forces are retained in both variants.*

*c. Excludes 15,000 ARVN personnel operating in Cambodia; this number held constant in both variants (if 15,000 are returned to MR 3, ratios in Variants 1 and 2 would change to 1.5 and 1.2, respectively).*

are not reflected by parallel reductions in logistic requirements. This results from the fact that most of the supplies provided by North Vietnam through Laos are arms and ammunition which are only a small share of total requirements. The major component of enemy supply requirements is foodstuff, most of which is obtained from Cambodian sources. The major effect of US withdrawals on the logistic constraints to enemy strategies is that the time required to build stockpiles is somewhat relaxed. This is particularly true for Cases V through VII where we estimate under Variant 2, for example, that the required stockpiles could probably be built up some two to three months sooner than in our basic analysis.

54. Even with this loosening of the logistic constraints, the required buildup for the maximum strategies would not be completed until very late in the 1971-72 dry season. In such a situation

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we estimate that Hanoi would still turn away from an all-out offensive. The need for secure re-supply channels, difficulties in the forward positioning of supplies, a generally unfavorable control situation, and uncertainties about casualty levels would all point to such a decision.

#### The Control Situation

55. One other factor which may influence Hanoi's choice of strategies is the control situation in the countryside. Control of the rural population by the government of Vietnam, according to the VSSG indicator for January, was at its highest level. As of the end of January, 67.5% of the rural population throughout South Vietnam was controlled by the GVN and its "presence" extended over another 15.2%. MR 1 in January had nearly 73% of its rural population under GVN control, the same general level established during the last quarter of 1970. Tentative readings of the control situation in February, however, indicate a possible deterioration in GVN control because of the increased number of enemy attacks. GVN control of MR 2 in January was the lowest throughout the country -- 56.6%. Nevertheless, this represents a considerable improvement since April 1970, when only 37.3% of the populace was under GVN control. Thus on the basis of the current control situation, MR 2 would appear to be a likely area for offensive campaigns. The peak of GVN control in MR 3 was reached in September 1970 (71.7%) and, unlike the other regions of the country, has declined somewhat since then to 69.6% in January with a further decline projected for February. For MR 4 the January GVN control rating was 69.1% of the population, and tentative estimates indicate a possible increase for February.

56. Attempts to estimate trends in the control situation on the basis of RVNAF and US deployments have always been difficult and have not been very accurate. The redeployment of US ground forces will no doubt have the greatest impact on the control situation in MR 1. The drawdown of US combat forces in MR 1 -- at the minimum some 17,000 of the 25,000 now there -- will not be fully replaced by ARVN personnel. The diminution of Allied main

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forces in the region undoubtedly will result in a degradation of pacification efforts. US withdrawals from MR 2, on the other hand, will be relatively insignificant, and projected ARVN ground forces deployments to the region will result in a net increase of friendly forces which may work to improve the control ratings.

57. Possible strategy options available to the Communist planners in light of the possible future control situation appear most favorable to the launching of an all-out offensive in MR 1. Despite the current relatively high level of government control in MR 1, the potential decrease in Allied strength in the region, and the proximity of manpower and supplies to the war would appear to be easily sufficient to offset GVN control gains over the last several years. Although current control levels in MR 2 are the lowest in the country, over the longer term the area is not so obviously a target for an enemy offensive strategy, largely because of longer supply lines from the north and projected ARVN force level augmentations. Were sufficient numbers of NVA troops introduced to offset increases in ARVN strength in MR 2, however, it is likely that control ratings would decline. Assuming a continued high level of enemy combat forces in Cambodia, the relatively high degree of government control in both MR 3 and MR 4 probably will continue to deter an enemy high-level strategy in the two regions.

## VI. Probable Vietnamese Communist Courses of Action

### Overview

58. Our review of the wide range of factors that will affect Hanoi's selection of the military courses of action it decides to initiate over the next 12 to 18 months yields several general conclusions. Hanoi's current actions and statements all indicate a Vietnamese Communist belief that they can wear down the US will to persist by persevering in the struggle. In essence, although Hanoi has many problems, it believes it can afford to be more patient than can Washington. Moreover, the North Vietnamese still

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adhere to the view that by persevering, they can create an overall political climate conducive to a settlement of the war that will result in a new political order in South Vietnam favorable to Communist interests.

59. Hanoi has a broad choice of options through which it can endeavor to move this scenario along. The least costly option would be a continuation of the war at the protracted levels of 1970 in which the emphasis would be on tactics designed to play for time and to conserve strength for the long haul. The most costly option would be a sustained offensive drive throughout South Vietnam and Cambodia. Between these extremes Hanoi has a number of intermediate options calling for sharply increased activity in one or more areas of Indochina.

60. There is little hard evidence as yet pointing strongly toward which of these courses might be followed. There are indeed some indications that Hanoi has not yet made up its own mind on its optimum course of action. We believe, however, that neither of the extreme options -- Cases I and VII -- is likely to be followed.

61. Any all-out effort such as that characterized by Case VII seems unlikely. Several factors tend to work against the undertaking of major offensive actions on the pattern of Case VII before the start of the 1972-73 dry season. Even though one of the effects of continued US withdrawals will be to loosen the logistic and manpower constraints operative on the Communists, they must still cope with the need to ensure reliable resupply channels once a major offensive is undertaken, with the difficulties in positioning supplies and troops in forward areas, and with their generally disadvantageous situation in terms of control of the countryside and the relative balance of combat forces. Thus we believe that Hanoi will adopt a more prudent course as long as the United States is still militarily strong in Indochina and longer term US policy there is still in doubt. The Communists must stay in a

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position to fight if the war goes on indefinitely, and we think they would be unwilling to gamble too many assets in an all-out military effort until their prospects for early success are considerably improved.

62. It seems equally unlikely, however, that the Communists would be content to continue to prosecute the war at the low levels typical of the past two years. By almost any measurement, their capabilities allow for more intensive offensive action. These capabilities will almost certainly increase as US troop withdrawals proceed over the next 18 months and the position of the South Vietnamese becomes more vulnerable.

Most Probable Course

63. Our analysis of North Vietnamese capabilities and objectives in South Vietnam indicates that we can expect to see progressively higher levels of combat over the next 12-18 months. For the most part these actions will be aimed at discrediting the Vietnamization program and influencing opinion within the United States in a way likely to compel changes in the US commitment and policy toward South Vietnam.

64. In view of the generally low level of infiltration this year, our estimates of logistic performance during the current dry season, and the Communists' currently unfavorable position within South Vietnam, however, we would not expect to see any major tactical changes until at least the end of this summer. Nevertheless, the Communists now have and will retain a capability for mounting frequent and relatively intensive high points of military activity. This would seem, for example, to be the current situation in Cambodia. In South Vietnam the most likely areas for this activity are in MR 1, where supply lines are short and units can quickly be reinforced, and MR 2, where the current control situation and balance of forces is relatively most favorable to the Communists.

65. But as we move into the 1971-72 dry season, the logistic and manpower constraints

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on Hanoi's military capabilities are likely to loosen, primarily because of the cumulative effect of US troop withdrawals and less intensive air interdiction programs. We estimate that early in the dry season (October-December) the North Vietnamese could carry out the resupply and infiltration necessary to support offensive campaigns in MR 1 or MR 2 (Cases II and III). By mid-season they could also support an offensive in Cambodia (Case V) or offensive activities carried on simultaneously in MR 1 and MR 2 (Case IV).

66. Our projections of enemy and friendly force dispositions indicate that by June 1972 MR 1 and the highland areas of MR 2 would be the most likely area for offensive action. The projected decrease of Allied forces in MR 1 increasingly will shift the main force balance in favor of the Communists and may result in a deterioration of GVN control of the countryside. Over this longer term, MR 2 -- particularly the highlands -- would become a less likely area for sustained offensive operations because of sizable deployments of ARVN forces to the area by June 1972.

67. To the extent the relative force and control balances shift in their favor, we would anticipate that the Communists will become increasingly less prudent through 1972, as they search for an opportunity to discredit the process of Vietnamization and to demonstrate that they are still a viable and effective military force. This urge to score military and political gains will increase as the process and extent of US withdrawal become more certain and tend toward irreversibility.

68. Finally, the Vietnamese Communists clearly see the election campaign period in the United States as an optimum time for applying pressures that might induce the present US government to disengage precipitately or help secure the election of a new administration committed to such a course. The Communists are likely to pull out more and more stops as November 1972 approaches

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in a mounting effort to heat up Vietnam as a US domestic political issue and make the war a greater political liability for President Nixon.

Best Case - Worse Case

69. The most probable course of action discussed above -- a progressive increase in the levels of combat over the next 12-18 months -- is neither the best nor worst of cases from the US point of view. While it might result in Allied setbacks in some areas of the country, the largest and most heavily populated areas could remain relatively unaffected. To the extent that the postulated military activities do not involve a well-coordinated and countrywide increase in enemy offensive actions, a number of Allied reactions -- ARVN redeployments, incursions into southern Laos, and modification of air interdiction programs -- might dampen the effects of such intermediate Communist strategies.

70. From our point of view, enemy strategies consonant with Case VI (MR I/Cambodia) or Case VII (GVN/Cambodia) would be much more unfavorable. Even though these types of multi-regional campaigns present increasing risks to the Communists, they could create new and potentially critical problems for the South Vietnamese. The options for redeployment of ARVN troops would be restricted and the prospects for a setback to the process of Vietnamization would increase. Moreover, major Communist successes in such large-scale offensives could have severe political repercussions in the United States.

71. The best case from the US point of view would be a Communist decision to adopt Case I -- the protracted warfare pattern of 1970. This strategy would be least disruptive to the process of US withdrawal and keep US casualties at a minimum. With the possible exception of MR I, it would also mean that Vietnamization could proceed apace. In most parts of the country the process of Vietnamization could be consolidated and fostered by social and economic development programs. Finally, a continuation

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of this strategy could further compound the Communists' difficulties in maintaining the morale of their forces and rebuilding a viable infrastructure.

VII. Postscript -- Intentions and Achievements

72. The above memorandum has assessed at length and in considerable detail what we believe the Communists are capable of attempting, or consider themselves capable of attempting, and the courses of action the Communists are likely to essay. We have also described the various military and, particularly, political results the Communists want to achieve through the actions they initiate. Regardless of what Hanoi wants or tries to do, however, the extent to which it succeeds in attaining its goals obviously depends in large measure on the reactions or pre-emptive actions of others -- the South Vietnamese, the Cambodians, the Lao, the Thai, and others, including, naturally, the United States. Hence a description of Communist intent is far from a prediction of inevitable Communist success. This memorandum was drafted as and should be read as a detailed analysis of Hanoi's intentions and capabilities. It was not written as an estimative prediction of the course of events in Indochina -- in the outcome sense -- over the period between now and the end of 1972. It should, therefore, not be read or regarded as a net outcome estimate.

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